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ABSTRACT

This report describes the rationale and training procedure employed in two summer inservice workshops sponsored by Auburn University's Title IV Center, and conducted by staff in their Counselor Education Department. The general goals were: (1) improved skill in communication, and (2) ability to engender helpful interpersonal relations. The critical role of verbal and non-verbal communication were emphasized in relation to public school educational goals. (Author/DM)

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ABSTRACT

Interpersonal Facilitative Communication Training With Team Teachers in Newly Integrated Schools

Training in facilitative communication was provided Black and White teachers who were preparing for team teaching assignments. Exercises designed to improve ability to respond with empathy, positive regard, and concreteness of expression were used. Attention was given to: (1) the critical role of verbal behavior in learning and (2) communication problems arising from cultural differences. Participants gave positive evaluations of the training via questionnaire.

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Interpersonal Facilitative Communications Training With Team Teachers in Newly Integrated Schools

This report describes the rationale and training procedure employed in two summer in-service workshops sponsored by Auburn University's Title IV Center. These programs were planned and conducted by staff in the Counselor Education Department. The participants included teachers, administrators, and counselors from Alabama public schools. Black and white personnel were equally represented. Many of them were preparing to teach on a Black-White team basis.

Improved skill in communication and ability to engender helpful interpersonal relations were the general workshop goals. The critical role of verbal and non-verbal communication in learning was emphasized in relation to the educational goals fostered by our public schools. Attention was given to: (1) the teacher or administrator in terms of his ability to facilitate the growth of others through his interpersonal behavioral techniques and (2) communication problems as a function of differences in cultural backgrounds.

RATIONALE AND MODEL FOR FACILITATIVE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Communication and Learning

Educators have long recognized the central role of verbal communication in teaching and learning. For example, Flanders wrote, "The chances are better than sixty percent that you will hear someone talking if you are in an elementary or secondary classroom." It is easily noted that teaching behavior is primarily verbal. A committee of the American Educational Research Association defines teaching as, "a form of interpersonal influence aimed at changing behavioral potential of another person.

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With this in mind, interpersonal communication is considered in terms of its potential to facilitate growth in others as a function of teachers, administrators, and various roles common to professional education.

Helpful Versus Nonhelpful Relationships

Carl Rogers has defined a helping relationship as, "a relationship in which at least one of the parties has the intent of promoting growth, development, maturity, improved functioning, improved coping with life of the other--a relationship in which one of the participants intends that there should come about in one or both parties, more appreciation, more expression of, more functional use of the latent inter-resources of the individual." He emphasized that such a relationship potentially includes that between parent and child, physician and patient, teacher and student, as well as counselor and client relationships. Moreover, he emphasized the role of verbal and non-verbal communication in all helping relationships.

The Facilitative Person

Robert Carkhuff has defined a facilitator as one whose behavior has constructive effects on others. "The facilitator is a person who is living effectively himself and who discloses himself in a genuine and constructive fashion in response to others. He communicates an accurate empathic and understanding and a respect for all of the feelings of other persons and guides discussions with those persons into specific feelings and experiences. He communicates confidence in what he is doing and is spontaneous and intense. In addition, while he is open and flexible in his relationship with others, in his commitment to the welfare of the other person, he is quite capable of active, assertive and even confronting behavior when it is appropriate." (Carkhuff).

In relation to this concept, there is current research evidence indicating that significant interpersonal relations may have constructive or

deteriorative effects. Also suggested is that the positive or negative consequences of interpersonal interaction can be accounted for by a core of facilitative conditions (Carkhuff). Hence, in the educational social context, this means that teachers who offer high levels of these conditions have constructive effects on students, while those offering low levels have deteriorative effects.

Core Conditions

The central thesis in this "facilitative model" is that it is the core conditions, created by each of us by what and how we communicate, that are primarily responsible for our helpfulness to others (Carkhuff). As teachers and administrators we provide various degrees of help as we respond to others. These core conditions are described in two categories and form the framework for communications training.

I. Facilitative Conditions: (These are the conditions that stimulate the other person to explore himself to self understanding).

A. Empathy or Understanding: The ability to see the world through the other person's eyes.

B. Respect or Caring for Someone: The ability to respond to the other person in such a way as to let him know that you care for him; that you believe in his ability to do something constructive relative to his problem and his life.

C. Concreteness or Being Specific: The ability to enable the other person to be specific about the feelings and experiences he is expressing.

II. Action Conditions: (These conditions involve action on the helper's part that stimulate the other person to initiate his own ideas as to what is happening and to act upon these ideas).

A. Genuineness: The ability to be real in a relationship with another person.

B. Confrontation: The art of being real is to tell the other person just like it is.

C. Immediacy: This refers to what is going on between the helper and other person. It is the helper's ability to understand different feelings and experiences that are going on between him and the other person.

D. Facilitative Self Disclosure: This refers to the extent that the helper shares his own feelings and experiences with the other person.

Assessment of the Core Conditions

Training and related research in interpersonal relations has resulted in a rating scale used to assess the degree of core conditions present in interaction processes (Carkhuff). All of the assessments are based on a five point scale. Level 1 is the lowest level of functioning and level 5 is the highest. Level 3 is defined as the minimally facilitative level of functioning. Level 3 is the minimal level of conditions in which an effective communication process can transpire. Moreover, level 3 is an interchangeable point insofar as the helper is giving back to the other person at least as much as is given to him.

For the purposes of the interpersonal communications training provided workshop personnel attention was given to training on the three facilitative conditions; empathy, respect, and concreteness. While this was dictated in part by practical considerations--training on all seven conditions would have required more time than was available; it was evident that these conditions were most crucial to facilitative communication. It was also recognized that professional educators are generally action-oriented. Hence, it was felt that training in the three facilitative dimensions was most important.

Training Procedures

The training process was initiated by showing a film, The Task of the Listener, based upon the work of Hayakawa. The film graphically illustrates three basic aspects of communication:

1. Communication deadlock occurs when one communicates to another in a way that threatens the self-concept.

2. Communication is enhanced when one listens non-evaluatively to another.

3. The goal of communication is the enrichment of those who are communicating.

After a large-group discussion of the film, the rationale of the training approach was presented, focusing on those points outlined above. Participants were then presented a series of video-taped helpee statements followed by a response from a helper. Participants were asked to make a gross estimate of the level of interpersonal communication offered by the helper. These estimates were in terms of high or low, helpful or non-helpful. This procedure was continued until the group reached the point where there was unanimity with respect to discrimination between helpful and non-helpful responses.

The large group was then divided into five smaller groups of 8-10 with a leader in each group. After a period of activity designed to acquaint members of the group to each other, the group leader presented more helpee-helper responses by audio tape. When he was satisfied with the group's ability to discriminate between helpful and non-helpful responses, the leader moved to a more advanced training activity.

Carhuff's rating scale was again described and the core dimension of empathic understanding was discussed. Group members were then presented a

series of ten helpee stimuli. As each stimulus was presented, group members responded anonymously by writing a response on a 3x5 card. The cards were passed to the group leader who led the group in estimating the level (on a scale ranging from 1-5) of empathic understanding communicated in each helper response. Each participant was, thus, provided feedback concerning his level of communication. The protection of remaining anonymous created a less threatening situation, making it more likely that feedback would be accepted.

The objective was to increase the ability to discriminate between helpful and non-helpful responses and to train group members in responding interchangeably (Carkhuff's level 3) on the dimension of empathic understanding. Such a response neither subtracts nor adds to the expression of the helpee. It leads the helpee to further self-exploration and is considered helpful. The writing of responses continued until group members were able to reach substantial agreement in rating reponses on the Carkhuff scale (difference between highest and lowest estimates became small) and until group members responded at or near the interchangeable level.

The next step in the training process involved role playing. Group members practiced playing the role of helper and helpee. The helpee presented a personally relevant statement and the helper attempted to respond at a level that communicated empathic understanding at an interchangeable level. Each helper response was rated on the Carkhuff scale. Group members gave reasons for their estimates, again providing direct feedback to the helper.

In the next activity group members continued to practice playing the role of helper, responding to personally relevant material of a more extended nature supplied by a group member in the helpee role. However, in

this activity the helper was instructed to practice the additional dimensions of respect (caring) and concreteness (specificity). In each case, a rating of the helper's response on the combined dimensions was provided by the group members.

In the final training activity, group members were instructed to give close attention to non-verbal communication, including posture, facial expressions, eye movement, etc. It may be seen that the training model provides for both increasing amounts of involvement on the part of participants and more feedback from the other group members concerning one's level of facilitative communication.

A discussion of how the participants might utilize the training in subsequent team-teaching workshop activity concluded the interpersonal communications training experiences.

Throughout the workshop activity, an attempt was made to focus on events where it appeared that cultural differences made an impact on communication. In these instances, each group attempted to use the group training process to deal with the problem.

Evaluation

A total of 74 workshop participants (two workshop groups) completed a questionnaire evaluating their experience. Virtually all felt that they had learned more about how they behaved in interpersonal communication (70) and that they had learned more about other people (72).

Each participant listed at least one way in which he felt he would behave differently in his interpersonal communication as a result of the workshop. Typical behavioral changes projected included listening more to the

other person, giving fuller attention to others and being more thoughtful before responding.

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